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## ***Year in Review – Edition I***

### **JOBS ACTION PLAN**

Senate Republicans took the economic reins in 2003 and proposed sweeping initiatives to jumpstart Michigan's stalled economy and help create good-paying jobs. The capstone of this effort is the 9-point "Job Opportunities for Business Success" plan, which includes:

- **Tool & Die.** Revitalizing the state's floundering tool & die industry, which has been especially hard hit with job losses and overseas competition, by providing tax relief through Tool & Die Recovery Zones. (*Presented to Governor, Senate Bills 811,814 & Senate Resolutions 188-190*)
- **MEGA Reauthorization.** Reauthorizing the Michigan Economic Growth Authority, which expires on Dec. 31, to continue the state's main tax-incentive granting authority used to spur economic development, (*Public Acts 248-251 of 2003*)
- **Venture Capital.** Creating a venture capital investment incentive by offering income and Single Business Tax breaks to spur new investment in Michigan businesses, particularly in the high-tech and life-sciences industries. (*Presented to Governor, Senate Bills 834-5 & Senate Resolution 163*)
- **CMI/Brownfield Development.** Establishing a Clean Michigan Initiative revolving loan program to accelerate the cleanup of abandoned brownfield sites. (*Public Acts 252 & 253 of 2003*)
- **Public Works Programs.** Expediting the 2002 voter-approved Sewer Bond Initiative to allow communities to start much-needed sewer projects sooner. (*Presented to Governor, Senate Bill 833*)
- **Care and Competitiveness.** Reduce (*by 50 percent over three years*) the tax businesses must pay on the healthcare benefits they provide their employees. (*Public Acts 240 & 241 of 2003*)

### **IMPROVING EDUCATION**

Protecting valuable education programs was key under the leadership of Senate Republicans, keeping education as a top priority for 12 years running.

**Merit Award Scholarship Program Protected** -- Senate Republicans turned back the efforts of Governor Granholm and others to eliminate the Michigan Merit Award Scholarship program in 2003. The Merit Award helps middle class working families afford a college education for their children. In the past two years alone, almost 100,000 Michigan families have benefited from this scholarship. This scholarship is the only state award that recognizes and rewards hard work and accomplishment regardless of where a student lives. (*Public Act 186 of 2003*)

**MEAP Protection** -- Persistent delays in processing the 2003 Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests prompted Senate Republicans to protect students and schools from being penalized. MEAP test scores are used to determine winners of the Michigan Merit Award Scholarships and is one of the tools used to determine whether schools meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Senate Bill 787 protects students and schools from being penalized if their MEAP answer sheets are lost by the Michigan Department of Education or a state contractor. Nine school districts in Michigan reported that the Michigan Department of Education lost their MEAP answer sheets. (*Presented to Governor*)

## **PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT**

Michigan's natural resources continued to be a top priority for Senate Republicans in 2003. Senators conducted the first thorough reviews of Michigan beverage container law and overall recycling efforts in more than two decades. The senate also led the way in stopping out-of-state waste from being dumped in our landfills, adopted tougher standards to protect Michigan's groundwater, and created new protections against the introduction of aquatic nuisance species.

**Stopping Out-of-State Waste** -- The bills include the following key provisions: Authorizes the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to establish a statewide inspection program, which would mandate at least four inspections each year of each landfill to ensure compliance. Random inspections also would be conducted to help ensure compliance. Starting Oct. 1, 2004, landfills would be required to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan's stringent waste standards. Two important landfill bans were added — beverage containers and whole tires — to further reduce reliance on landfills and encourage recycling. The DEQ director was granted emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public's health or safety or to the safety of the environment. New fines were added – of up to \$25,000 per day – for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills. A two-year moratorium was mandated on issuing certain new landfill permits. (*Passed Senate, awaiting action in House of Representatives*)

**Protecting Michigan's Aquifers** -- This law requires the Department of Environmental Quality to compile a mapping of groundwater resources in Michigan. In addition to creating this significant mapping and inventory, the law requires a more consistent water use reporting program. It also creates a special limited duration advisory council consisting of representatives of all major impacted user groups to help policymakers chart out the next steps to protect this resource and help implement a new method for resolving conflicts over groundwater use. (*Public Act 148 of 2003*)